

Facts & Information

June 1999

Washington Telephone Assistance Program A lifeline to essential services

A telephone is a lifeline to essential services. But, in times of financial stress, some households can find it difficult to maintain phone service. Loss of phone service not only threatens a household's health but also makes it difficult to communicate with current or future employers.

The State of Washington, the federal government and your local telephone company manage a program that helps preserve phone service for financially-stressed households. The Washington Telephone Assistance Program (WTAP) also helps people acquire phone service by reducing the financial hurdles in starting up service.

Who is eligible

Adults receiving continuing financial or medical assistance from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) are eligible for WTAP. Eligible programs include but are not limited to: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Food Stamps, General Assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medical Assistance, Refugee Assistance, DSHS Chore Services, and Community Options Program (COPES).

What WTAP offers

For those who already have telephone service or would like to get it, WTAP provides the following:

Free installation - WTAP, combined with a matching federal program, will cover the cost of phone service installation. This benefit is available no more than once per year.

Waiver of the deposit - WTAP will waive any deposit requirements for local service that a telephone company might otherwise apply to a customer. Again, this benefit is available only once per year.

Low monthly rate - WTAP caps the amount a participant pays for local phone service. The current cap is \$4 a month. Participants must pay full price for all other telephone services such as long-distance toll calls, answering services and features such as Caller ID.



P.O. Box 47250
1300 S. Evergreen Park Dr SW
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

Local: (360)664-1160
Toll Free: 800-562-6150
TTY: (360)586-8203

Web site: www.wutc.wa.gov
Email: info@wutc.wa.gov

All UTC publications are
available in alternate formats.
Call (360)664-1133.

How to get WTAP service

To enroll in the telephone assistance program, contact your local telephone company. You will need to give them your DSHS client identification number. If you receive a WTAP certificate, you may take it to your telephone company office or mail it to them. The telephone company will verify your eligibility with DSHS. All information you supply is confidential.

You can expect to see the new WTAP telephone rates on your telephone bill approximately 30 days from the day you apply.

Restrictions on WTAP support

WTAP applies only to residential, local telephone service. Only one telephone line per house is allowed under the program. The billing name must match the name of the person who qualifies the household for the program. You will have to pay full price for long-distance calls and special features such as Call Forwarding and Call Waiting.

How WTAP works

After WTAP determines a customer is eligible to participate, the program compensates the local telephone company directly for the discounts a participant receives.

Who pays for the program

WTAP works in coordination with a matching federal program. The state portion comes from a legislatively-authorized charge assessed on every telephone line in the state of Washington. This charge is capped at 14 cents a month. The actual amount varies from year-to-year depending on program demand. The federal program is supported by fees paid by long-distance telephone companies. For more information about WTAP, call toll-free 1-888-700-8880.

How to contact the program?

Call the program's toll-free number **1-888-700-8880**.